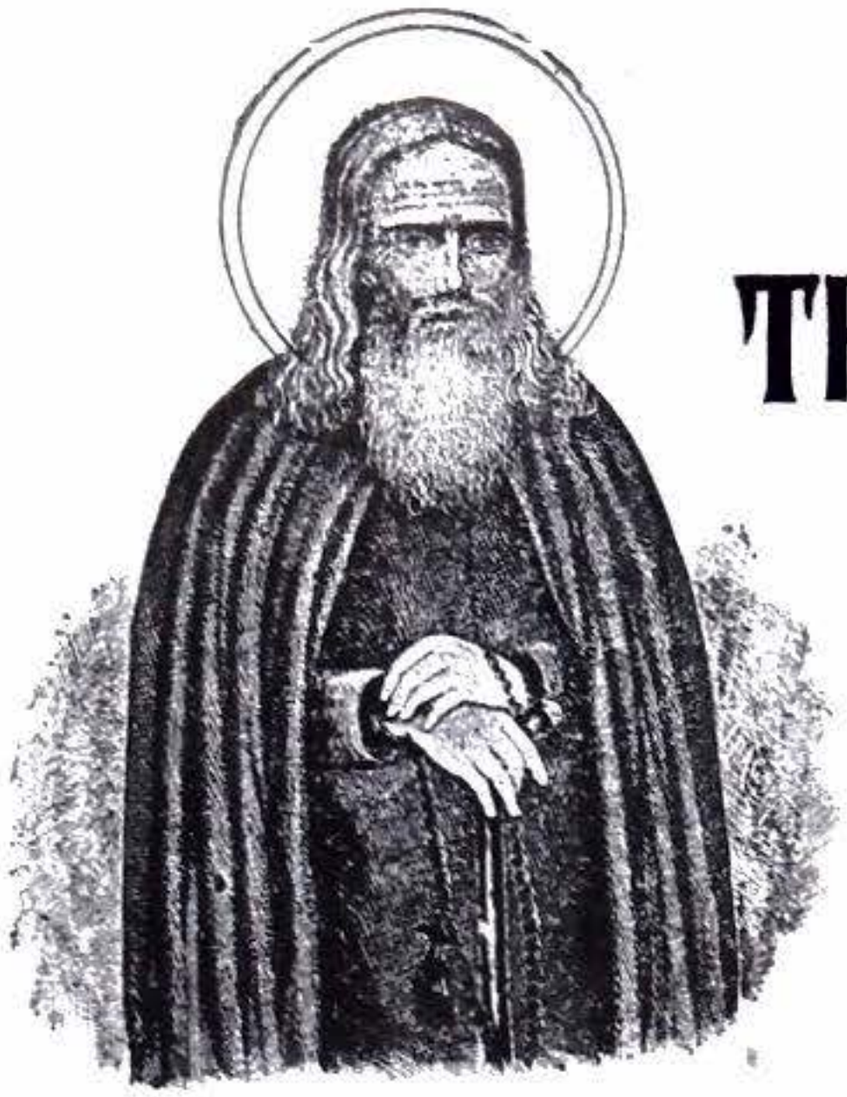
THE ORTHODOX WORD



THE ORTHODOX WORD

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OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF
SAINT HERMAN OF ALASKA

Established with the blessing of His Eminence the late *John* (*Maximovitch*), Archbishop of Western America and San Francisco, Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

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COVER: St. Seraphim in the Sarov Forest, a 19th-century painting, reproduced from the *Diveev Chronicle,* 1903.

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St. Seraphim of Sarov

1833 - 1903 - 1973

IN 1833 the great St. Seraphim died, but he left the promise that he would remain alive for the faithful and would hear the prayers of those who would call upon him in faith. The following seventy years proved the truth of his promise, and it was the evidence of his continued intercession for the faithful in Sarov, in Diveev, and throughout Holy Russia, that led to his canonization in 1903.

On the eve of the canonization, as by a miracle of God's mercy, some hitherto unknown documents recording the conversations of St. Seraphim with Motovilov were discovered, and they came as a true revelation to the modern world, giving in particular the teaching of the ancient Holy Fathers on the aim of the Orthodox Christian life, the acquiring of the Holy Spirit of God.

In the seventy years since his canonization St. Seraphim has continued to be with the suffering Orthodox people of Russia in the most difficult period of their history, consoling them even in the midst of trials unparalleled in human history, whereby the devil for over half a century has striven to uproot from men's hearts the very memory of the Faith of Christ by which St. Seraphim shone forth.

All the signs of these times point to the approaching end of this world, and thus to the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the totally unexpected events that are to occur in Russia. The continued presence of St. Seraphim in Russia, even after the destruction of his monastery and the loss of his holy relics, is already a herald of these coming events in a land which, although sold into slavery, has not lost the remembrance and meaning of its holy calling.

SAINT SERAPHIM OF SAROV
1759-1833

An old engraving from one of the
earliest editions of the Saint's Life (c. 1841)

"Toward that time the bishops will become so impious that in their impiety they will surpass the Greek bishops at the time of Theodosius the Younger (5th century), so that they will no longer even believe in the chief dogma of the Faith of Christ."

PROPHECY OF ST. SERAPHIM
concerning the times
near the end of this world

MARTYROLOGY OF
THE COMMUNIST YOKE

Saint Seraphim in Bonds

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE GREAT SAROV MONASTERY

Remember that Jesus Christ of the
seed of David is risen again from
the dead, according to my gospel,
wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil-doer,
even unto bonds; but the word
of God is not bound.

ST. PAUL II Tim. 2:8-9

HAVING SURVIVED the first years of the Revolution and the terrible trials of persecution and the apostasy of the Living Church, St. Seraphim's Sarov Monastery and Diveev Convent were closed by the Communists in 1927. Only partial information has come down to us concerning the suffering and fate of the many holy monks and nuns who lived in these monasteries at that time, but what has come down is enough to form a separate chapter in the history of Russia's new martyrs. Here is what is known of some of the leading Sarov monks:

ABBOT HIEROTHEUS was the abbot of Sarov during the canonization of St. Seraphim in 1903; then he retired and led an ascetic life until he was sent by the Communists to Temnikov prison (the former Sanaxar Monastery), where he met his suffering and death.

ABBOT RUFINUS: In 1927, after the closure of the monastery, he was arrested and imprisoned in the prison of Arzamas, where he was cruelly tortured. According to the testimony of those who were with him in prison, once when he was brought back to his cell after a long interrogation, none of the prisoners could recognize him. His whole face was swollen, especially under the chin. All the hair of his beard had been pulled out. Soon after this he was tortured to death.*

MONK BASIL, a severe ascetic. His obedience was to stay always by the spring of St. Seraphim and dispense holy water to the pilgrims. During the destruction of the monastery, the atheist "activists" made a bonfire in the middle of the monastery, threw into it icons and other holy objects after sacrilegiously

* Archpriest Michael Polsky, *Russia's New Martyrs,* Jordanville, N.Y., 1957, vol. II, p. 228.

trampling on them, and burned the log-coffin which had been made by the Saint himself and in which his relics had reposed for seventy years until his canonization; then they destroyed both of the log cabins in the Saint's "Near" and "Far" Hermitages, and having defiled his spring and muddied it, they martyred Father Basil, who died as a true monk — at his obedience.**

MONK ISAAC: A clairvoyant elder who was known to the whole of Orthodox Russia, it was through him that St. Seraphim revealed to the monks what to do with his holy relics. At the time of the destruction of the monastery, "the monks resisted the taking away of the holy relics and locked themselves in the Dormition church where the relics of the Saint lay, declaring that they would all be killed rather than give up the relics. For three days the monks remained locked up in the church without eating... In Sarov at that time lived the ascetic, Father Isaac, a disciple and successor of the renowned Elder Anatole (of Sarov), who died in 1922. Elder Isaac, grieving over what was happening and having pity on the brethren, prayed to the Saint for three days that he would instruct them how to act. On the third day St. Seraphim appeared to him and said: 'It is the will of God that my relics be taken away from here and the monastery destroyed; do not hinder this.' When the Elder told this vision to the brethren, the monks left the church, and the commission of secret police agents and local Soviet 'experts,' having gathered the relics into a wooden box, took them away, and the monks in the evening of February 9, 1927, were all driven away from Sarov, and in this way the Sarov Hermitage ended its existence... The relics of St. Seraphim were taken to Moscow and placed in the Rumyantsev Museum (converted into an anti-religious museum), and in the newspapers it was announced that the bones of Seraphim of Sarov had been brought, and those who wished could view them. The people began to come in masses to the museum to venerate the holy relics, tickets were sold for admission to the museum costing three rubles, but despite this high charge the people came, wept, prayed, and bowed down before the glass cover under which the relics lay. There were many healings. Then the Communists, seeing that not a mockery, but rather a glorification of the holy relics was occurring, announced that the relics were no longer in the museum, but had been taken away to the city of Penza. The faithful were not satisfied with this announcement, and many went to Penza to be convinced for themselves, but in Penza it was announced to them that there were no relics there. Thus the relics of St. Seraphim were hidden, and now it is not known where they are."*

In Russia it was widely believed that the relics of the Saint were stolen from the train which was taking them away from Moscow and were hidden by members of the Catacomb Church.

The fate of Sarov Monastery and the continued presence of St. Seraphim there after its closure are described in the memoirs of the Nun Veronica, who was a prisoner in the hospital of one of the concentration camps in St.

** *Loc. cit.*

* Hieromonk George of Sarov, from the words of Abbot Methodius, an eyewitness, in the *Messager* of the Rus. Stud. Chr. Mvmt., May-June, 1934, p. 20.

Seraphim's forest near the monastery: "Around our barracks, as a thick green wall, stood a forest of age-old pines. Amidst the columns of their red trunks was the bright emerald green of curving birches — the unforgettable Sarov forest, unique in the world. Involuntarily we all felt the invisible power and the grace-filled nearness of the holy monastery. The Saint himself appeared once on a road in the forest to a sick monk-prisoner when he became exhausted under the weight of his burden and could not go on. Almost all the believing prisoners experienced St. Seraphim's help in their own lives. They felt his protection and defense in the midst of the most difficult trials. At first a concentration camp was built in the monastery. But such a despondency attacked the officials of the 'special division' who were sent there, and so frequent did cases of suicide among them become, that the camp was transferred to another place, and in the monastery an orphanage for the children of prisoners was established. It is related that at night the children often see an elder in a white garment and a black half-mantle."†

Diveev Convent was closed by the Communists in September, 1927, some months after Sarov. Here is how its end was described by Mother Alexandra, as recorded by Dr. A. P. Timofievich:* "For several months before the closure, there were signs in the monastery. Sometimes the bells would ring by themselves, sometimes the main church would be all illuminated inside at night and everyone would become alarmed and think there was a fire, but then everything would again be quiet and dark. And this happened many times. But when our Blessed one (Maria, the clairvoyant fool for Christ) made a great uproar and began to prophesy clearly that a disaster was coming — then our eldest nuns assembled and decided to hide all of the Saint's holy things, distributing them to trustworthy people. Everything was taken away."**

"And what about the chief holy object," I asked: "the wonderworking Icon of the Mother of God of Tender Feeling (*Umileniye*)? Was it saved?"

"The Lord helped to save it too; and we believe that His wrath is not unto the end, and that when the monastery will arise from the ashes, the Icon also will return to its place. Earlier an exact copy of the Icon was made and was placed in a metal covering; but the original has been taken far away, where the hand of the blasphemer will not reach it."

And so Sarov and Diveev Monasteries were destroyed, the vast forest of Sarov chopped down, the Saint's relics mocked, and his very memory as it were abolished from the face of the Russian land. And yet, Sarov and Diveev Monasteries are specifically mentioned in the prophecies of St. Seraphim concerning the future of Russia. Further, we know from many indications that St. Seraphim himself is alive today in the hearts of many of the Russian people, even those who have been raised entirely under atheist influence. The following account, as recorded by S. Rozhdestvensky from the words of a Soviet Army officer who escaped to the West, is by no means a unique case of the presence of St. Seraphim in the suffering Russian land:

† St. Vladimir's Russian National Calendar for 1973, p. 119.
* *We Were Guests at St. Seraphim's,* in Russian, Jordanville, N.Y., 1953.
** One of these holy objects, the icon-portrait of St. Seraphim, is now in the monastery of New-Diveev at Spring Valley, N.Y.

I was born and grew up in the city of Arzamas, near the former Sarov Monastery. If I am not mistaken, it was about 1929 when this monastery with its very valuable and vast forest (a forest for building, as we say) was turned by the Soviet regime into a corrective-labor camp. Not only the cells of the monks and the monastery buildings, but even the monastery churches (both summer and winter churches) were turned into barracks for prisoners. In the churches bunks were built in several layers and the churches themselves were surrounded by barbed wire. But around the whole monastery also rows of barbed wire extended, and there were watchtowers. What happened to the relics of St. Seraphim of Sarov I don't know. From my mother I heard that they were taken away somewhere, as they said, to one of the anti-religious museums of the land.

In these years when the corrective-labor camp existed, narrow-guage lines were laid out throughout the monastery in order to take out the trees. The forest was valuable and went, for the most part, for export abroad. In the neighborhood we often met parties of prisoners, with a guard of course, and sometimes with watchdogs also. In general it was not recommended for us free citizens to go near this concentration camp or express interest in it. In the end we also became used to it. And whenever echelons of prisoners would be unloaded at our stations, we young people would only shrug our shoulders. After all, these were enemies of the people, that's where they belonged.

I can add that before my very eyes the immensely valuable forest, in which bears had roamed, was greatly thinned, and of its previous grandeur we could judge only by the tales of my mother and acquaintances.

Once with a group of Pioneers (Communist "Scouts") I accidentally wandered across the mass graves of the prisoners, which were laid out near the monastery itself. Even then I was unpleasantly struck by the size of the cemetery. Dread overcame us Pioneers, and we quickly left. Later, in the long winter evenings, I sometimes listened in on mother's quiet conversation with some old women. They usually talked about the hundreds and thousands of prisoners who had been martyred by hunger and overwork. They sighed, ohed, and crossed themselves, and mother always wept because of these conversations. I knew that she was very religious and had hidden old icons somewhere, and that she went around to the churches which remained in Arzamas. She did not prevent me from living my own life: from the Pioneers I went to the Komsomol (Communist Youth), and then went away to study and work in a factory, and therefore I did not interfere in her private matters. But I did not ridicule her faith.

During the Second World War I was sent from the army to military school. Before leaving for the front I was able to come home for a visit. This was in the summer of 1943. Mother once asked me to accompany her as far as the church. In that year two or three churches were opened in the city, it appears, and every prohibition against religion was lifted. Some kind of solemn service was going on in church. Mother even remarked to me that

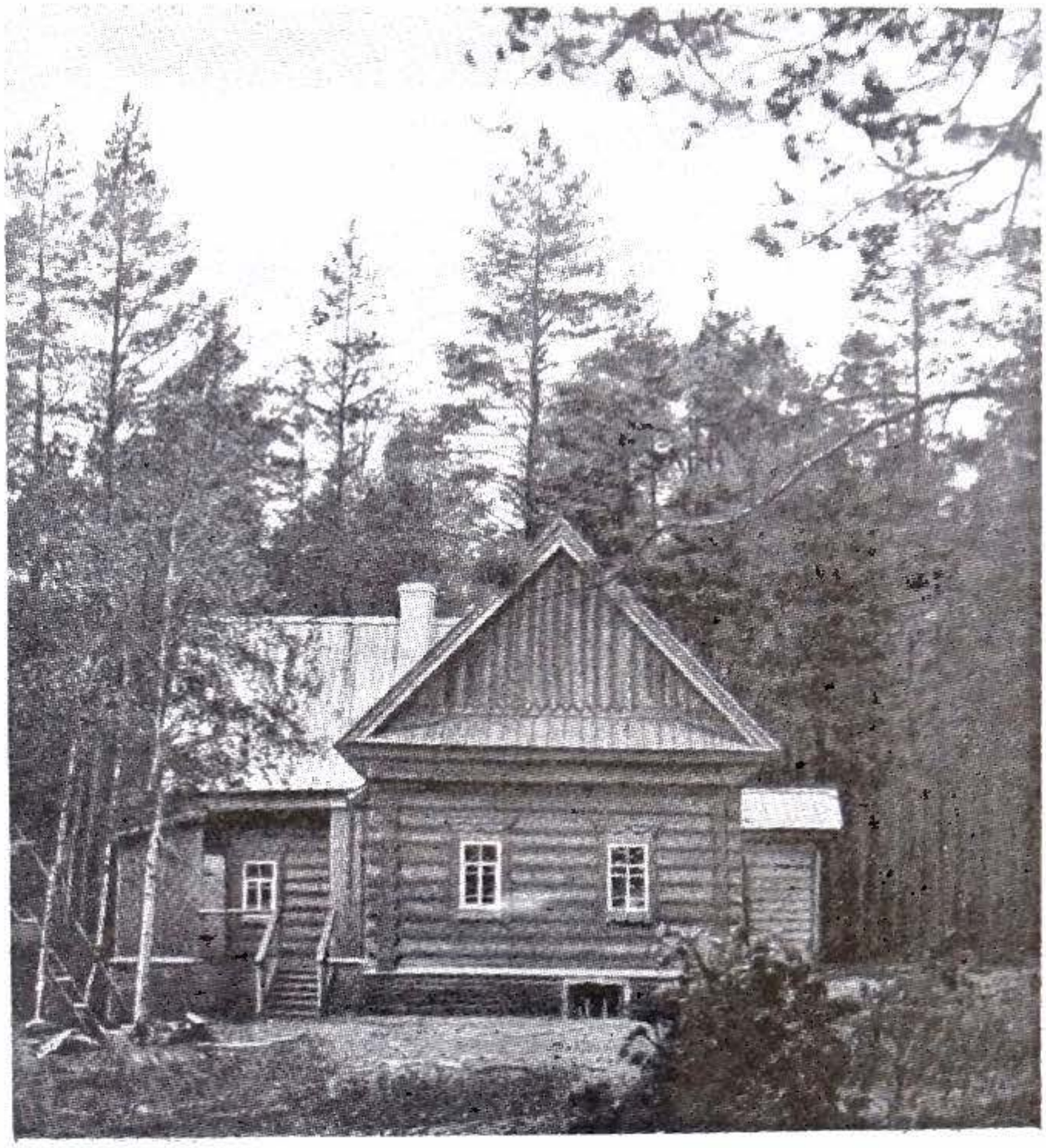
Sarov Monastery just before its destruction by the Soviets, viewed from the east

ST. SERAPHIM:

An old portrait of the Saint, made long before his official canonization.

It came from the cell of the late Father Parthenius of Karoulia on Mount Athos.

Presently it is in the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Boston, where the fathers treasure it as a great relic.



Saint Seraphim's Far Hermitage

Saint Seraphim's Near Hermitage

there they were going to pray for the granting of victory over the enemy and that now, in connection with the war, one could see many soldiers in the churches.

I went with mother, desiring to give her this small joy. Near the church, in fact, I noticed many paupers and likewise soldiers, who entered the church quite boldly. I also decided to look and I entered there with mother. We could hardly force ourselves into the church, there were so many people. In the middle of the church I noticed many candles in front of a large icon of Seraphim of Sarov, and even flowers around the icon-stand. The service was going on. But I did not stay in church long — I was unaccustomed to everything there, and to speak frankly, I was afraid that some one of my companions, former Komsomois, might see me there.

At night I left for the front. Just before my departure mother, of course, wept, and then somehow unexpectedly she told me: "I believe you will remain alive. I will pray, and he will preserve you!"

"Who is he?" I asked.

"Our Saint, Seraphim of Sarov," mother answered.

Not desiring to offend mother, I answered her nothing then, but in my soul I only laughed at her prediction.

Oh yes, I should add that on this visit some icons were hanging openly in the corner of mother's room, and one of them was of Seraphim of Sarov. Mother explained to me that many people now had icons out. She related also that in the churches all the newly-born were being baptized, and boys were being given the name Seraphim. "In honor of our Saint," she added.

At the front endless campaigns and battles began. I was slightly wounded twice, received decorations and promotions. Our regiment for its military merits was called a "guardian" regiment. At that time we all lived on the dream that the enemy would be quickly banished and destroyed.

In the summer of 1944, during the decisive battles on the Polish border, I was seriously wounded and lay unconscious for several days. As I found out later, the physicians had no hope that I would be saved. And then, believe it or not as you wish, at the moment when my organism was fighting with death, I dreamed that I was again a Pioneer and that we were walking in the forest by Sarov Monastery — there where once we Pioneers had come across the prisoners' cemetery. For some reason I became separated from the others. Some kind of terror overcame me. And suddenly an old man came out of the forest. He came up to me quickly, looked me right in the eyes, put his hand on my head, and said: "But you will live! Your mother obtained this by her prayers!..." And I had no time to come to myself or become afraid when he had already disappeared. I woke up... I was in a hospital ward, not a forest. A doctor and a nurse were standing by my cot and saying something. I remember only one remark: "The crisis has passed!" I stubbornly tried to remember where I had met that old man before. Finally I remembered: in the church in Arzamas, on the icon. Then I gently fell asleep...

I lay in this hospital several weeks more and then again went to the front. I stormed the Oder, Berlin, climbed on German tanks, earned another two medals. One may say that I was in hell itself, but I was certain that I would remain alive. But why, actually, I was so certain—I could not explain to myself at that time...

The war ended. Our regiment remained in occupied Germany. At the end of 1947 I went home again. But I did not find my mother — she had died. I went to her grave in the city cemetery. On the way back from the cemetery, for some reason I decided to look at the church into which I had gone with my mother before leaving for the front. It was getting dark. In the half-lit church there were few people. I again saw that icon of Seraphim of Sarov. I looked at it and something shuddered in my heart. I remembered my old mother. Coming out of the church, I turned my attention to the citizens who were hurrying along the streets. And I remarked to myself: in the victorious country everyone is dressed more poorly than the Germans. But more important: everyone's face looks worried, sad, and distressed...

Outside the church were invalids of the War, without legs, openly begging alms — yet another new blow and a new discovery. After looking all around, I inconspicuously gave them everything I had in my pocket. On the way to my friends', I noticed more of the same invalids. From my friends I found out that religion was again in disgrace and was being persecuted. Both icons and churches had again become dangerous things.

That evening I got drunk with my friends. Many of them were responsible workers, one of them, just like me, being a war hero. We recalled the Komsomol, the campaigns, the war. It's strange, but not a word was spoken about the future. I heard them talk, but I didn't understand them and only drank and drank. Concerning myself and my experiences I didn't say a single word to them. In the morning, before the end of my leave, I left my native Arzamas with the firm intention never to return.

At the station I accidentally came across a party of prisoners. They were being forced to walk under convoy to Sarov Monastery. And suddenly I caught myself in a traitorous thought: "You dogs! Before you at least unloaded the prisoners at night, but now you aren't ashamed to do it in the morning!"...

Well, later on, step by step everything began to be revealed to me anew. I began to see more often at night the little old man, Seraphim of Sarov. Now I understood that he was not like the rest of us... And now you see, my eyes were opened so much that I escaped from there. And I do not regret it.*

This and numerous other testimonies give us no grounds to doubt that the great Saint Seraphim, even in bonds, is alive in Russia today and grants his aid as ever to the now-crucified Orthodox Russian people, who with him await, in God's time, the day of deliverance.

Holy Father Seraphim, pray to God for us!

* Translated from *Novoye Russkoye Slovo,* "Sarov Monastery," Aug. 1, 1970.

A Case of Exorcism of an Evil Spirit in Our Own Days

BY BISHOP SAVVA OF EDMONTON*

(*Orthodox Russia*, 1967, no. 17)

Bishop Savva at his death early this year was writing a complete Life of the Blessed Archbishop John Maximovitch. Sixteen chapters of materials for this Life have appeared in Russian in ORTHODOX RUSSIA. *The following account is a translation of Chapter* 11. *Other chapters and unpublished materials will appear in future issues.*

HERE WE PRINT an account of the healing of a demon-possessed man in Shanghai by our man of prayer, Vladika John, in the years when he was Bishop of Shanghai (1934-1949).

"Once I came to the cemetery to pray at the grave of my mother. I stood reflecting: which is better, to live or to die? Suddenly I heard a man's voice: 'Good morning!' I shuddered from the unexpectedness of it. This man asked me who was buried here. I replied that it was my mother. He continued the conversation. 'That is normal, that your mother lies here; but for me it is my son who lies here. He was young, under thirty years old, and I rejoice that he has already died.'

"I was thunderstruck, hearing what he said, and of course I asked: 'But why do you rejoice?' He replied that he rejoiced because his son was healed before his death from demonic possession and, thanks to Vladika John, he died a true Christian.

"I asked him: 'You mean that your son had a nervous ailment?'

* On Bishop Savva see *The Orthodox Word*, 1972, no. 6.

" 'No, my son was possessed. He hated everything holy, all holy icons and crosses he tore up into the tiniest pieces and very much rejoiced over this. I would bring him to Vladika John and he made him stand on his knees and put on his head sometimes the Cross, and sometimes the Gospel. My son would be very sad after this, and sometimes he would run out of the Cathedral. But Vladika told me not to despair. He would continue to pray for him, and in time he would recover; but for the time being let him continue to be treated by doctors. "And do not take it so hard," he said; "the Lord is not without mercy." '

"Thus it dragged on for several years, he related. The son was taken to Minchon (a home for the psychologically ill), and sometimes he was let out to go home, and then his father would again lead him to the Cathedral. Sometimes he was given Holy Communion, when his father would see that he was in such a state that he would not run out of church immediately after receiving Communion in order to spit it out. Just as before, he would tear up crosses and icons, but he became somehow calmer, and he began to read the Gospel. The father understood that the prayers of Vladika John had reached God.

"He was home one time, lying in bed and reading the Gospel. His face was so bright and joyful. And he said: 'You know, Papa, we have to be in Minchon, I have to go there; there the Spirit of God will cleanse me from the spirit of evil and darkness, and then I will depart to the Lord. Let's go quickly and make the arrangements.'

"The father immediately went to all the offices and insisted that his son be accepted, since earlier they had told him that his son was not dangerous for the people around him and he could be kept at home. He was helped in everything by the emigrant committee and by a Chinese doctor whose wife had helped Russians a great deal and had even adopted a Russian child.

"They brought him to Minchon (25 or 30 miles from Shanghai). In two days the father came to visit him and saw that his son was absolutely impossible: he was restless, constantly moving on his bed; and then he suddenly began to shout: 'Don't do it, don't come near me, I don't want you!'

The father looked, looked, and went into the corridor to look some more, to see who was coming and where, who it was that had disturbed the spirit of evil that was in his son. The corridor was long and looked out on an alley. There he saw an automobile, and from it Vladika John had come out and was heading for the hospital. The father went into the ward again and saw that his son was writhing on the bed and shouting: 'Don't come near, I

don't want you, go away, go away!' Then he became calm and began quietly to pray, whispering the prayers. The father likewise began to pray. At this time he heard a door open and close somewhere, and he heard steps in the corridor.

"The sick man jumped up from bed and ran along the corridor in his pajamas. Meeting Vladika, he fell down before him on his knees and wept, begging him to chase out of him the spirit of evil.

"Vladika laid his hands on his head and read prayers, then he took him by the shoulders and led him into the ward, where he also laid him on the bed and prayed over him. Then he gave him Holy Communion.

"When Vladika had left, the sick man said: 'Well, now at last my healing has been accomplished, and now the Lord will take me to Himself. Papa, take me quickly, I must die at home.'

"When the father brought him home, he was so happy to see everything in his own room, and especially the icons, and he began to pray and took the Gospel.

"The next day he began to hurry his father to call a priest quickly to give him Holy Communion once more.

"The father said that he had just received Communion the day before, but the son objected and said: 'Papa, quickly, quickly, or you won't be in time.'

"The father called a priest. The priest came and gave the son Communion once more. And while the father accompanied the priest, Father Sergius Borodin, to the stairway and returned, his son's face had already changed and become somehow old. Again he smiled to him, but already without movement, and only his eyes as it were said: 'Papa, farewell, how good it is!'

"I asked who had made such a splendid memorial for his son. He replied that it was the Chan family, Chinese people who were his good friends and very kind people. Later I became acquainted with these Chinese people, and they confirmed all of this for me.

Maria Y."

This incident is very interesting. It sometimes happens that evil spirits are the instruments of God's wrath, and God allows them to cause suffering to people for their sins, so that at least through suffering they might come to self-awareness, repent of their sins, and be corrected.

In the Prologue (Lives and Sayings of Saints) under September 1 we read the following story:

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Once a certain priest was sitting in the church porch and reading the Holy Gospel. While reading, suddenly he felt as if some kind of dark and ominous cloud had surrounded him, and at the same time the light was extinguished in his eyes and his mind was darkened, and he was paralyzed in all his members and became dumb.

And he remained in this frightful affliction for nine years and suffered so much that, lying on his bed, he could not turn from side to side without someone's help. Meanwhile, it happened that finally his relatives, having heard of the miracles which St. Simeon the Stylite was performing, took the priest and carried him to the Saint. And when they had not quite reached the monastery in which Simeon was living and had lain down to rest, at this time it was revealed from above to the Saint, who was standing at prayer, concerning the affliction of the priest and that he was approaching. Then the Saint called one of his disciples, gave him holy water, and said: "Take this water and hasten quickly out of the monastery. Near it you will find a sick priest being carried on a bed; sprinkle him with holy water and tell him the following: Sinful Simeon tells you, 'In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, arise and leave your bed and come to Simeon yourself.'" The disciple went and did as the Saint had indicated to him. The priest immediately became well, came to the Saint and fell at his feet. Simeon said to him, "Arise and do not fear. Even if the devil has brought sorrow upon you for nine years, still God's love for mankind did not forget you and did not allow you to perish utterly. Know also that the devil was allowed to offend you because you stood in the holy Altar without fear and without reverence, because you listened to slanderers and those who were slandered by them you deprived of Holy Communion without seeking out the truth. Thereby you sorrowed God and greatly rejoiced the devil, under whose dark power you thus fell. But now, seeing that God's love for mankind and His mercies have been multiplied in you, release those whom you saddened by excommunication, and just as God has had mercy on you, do you likewise to them." After these words the priest departed from the Saint with great joy and fulfilled all that he had commanded him.

And so, at that time there was St. Simeon the Stylite, and now Vladika John. That was in ancient times, but now it is in our own day. The power of God, just as through the holy Stylite, so now also through Vladika John, has acted and exorcised the evil spirit of the torturer. *Wondrous is God in His Saints, the God of Israel.*

Bishop Savva of Edmonton

The SCROLL

CONTAINING
SIX CHAPTERS ON MENTAL PRAYER
By Our Father of Blessed Memory,
ELDER PAISIUS VELICHKOVSKY

CHAPTER TWO

THE BEGINNING OF THIS DIVINE MENTAL PRAYER, AND WHAT TESTIMONIES THE GOD-BEARING FATHERS BRING FORTH CONCERNING IT FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE.

BEFORE INDICATING from whence this Divine prayer has its very beginning, I must present something by way of general information. Let it be known that, according to the writings of our Holy and God-bearing Fathers, there are two mental prayers: one for beginners, belonging to activity; and another for the advanced, belonging to vision. The one is the beginning, and the other the end; for activity is the ascent to vision. And one should know that, according to St. Gregory the Sinaite, there are eight primary visions, which he enumerates as follows: "We say that the eight primary visions are: first, the vision of God, the invisible and unoriginate and uncreated Divinity, cause of all, One in Trinity and above all being; second, that of the rank and order of the mental powers; third, that of the composition of [visible] beings; fourth, that of the overseeing condescension of the Word; fifth, that of the universal resurrection; sixth, that of the terrible Second Coming of Christ; seventh, that of eternal torment; eighth, that of the Kingdom of God which has no end." Having presented this, I shall relate, according to the poverty of my infirm reason, in what manner activity and vision must be understood.

Let it be known, then (I speak to those who are simple like myself), that the whole labor of monasticism by which anyone may have labored, with God's help, in love for his neighbor and for God, in meekness, humility, and patience, and in all the other commandments of God and the Holy Fathers, in perfect submission of soul and body according to God, in fasting, vigil, tears, and prostrations and other ways of exhausting the body, in all-fervent performance of the church and cell rule, in the secret mental exercise of prayer, in lamentation, and in reflection on death — all such labor, as long as the mind is still guided by its own human authority and will, may accurately be called activity; but in no way may it be called vision. And if such mental labor of

prayer somewhere in the writings of the Holy Fathers might be called sight, this is only in a simple way of speaking, inasmuch as the mind, as the eye of the soul, is called sight.

But when, by God's help and the above-mentioned labor, and above all by profound humility, a man purifies his soul and heart from every defilement of the passions of soul and body—then the grace of God, the common mother of everyone, taking the mind which has been cleansed by it as a child by the hand, leads it up as by steps to the above-mentioned spiritual visions, revealing to it according to the degree of its purification the unutterable Divine mysteries to which the mind cannot attain. And it is this that in truth is called true spiritual vision, which is the prayer of sight, or, according to St. Isaac, pure prayer, from which come awe and vision. But into this it is not possible for anyone to enter by his own self-willed labor, unless God visit him and lead him up to it by His grace. And if anyone dare to ascend into such visions without the light of God's grace, as St. Gregory the Sinaite says (Homily 130), let him know that he forms imaginations and not visions, imagining them and imaginations being presented to him by a spirit of imagination. And now, such an understanding of active and contemplative prayer being presented, the time has already come to indicate from whence Divine mental prayer has its beginning.

Let it be known that, according to the testimony of our Divinely-wise, Holy and God-bearing Father Nilus the Faster of Sinai, mental Divine prayer such as is suitable for the perfect was given by God Himself already in paradise to the first-created man. For St. Nilus says this (Homily 49) to those who pray fervently, so that they might manfully preserve the fruit of prayer and that their labor might not be in vain: "Having prayed according to rule, await those things which are not according to rule, and stand manfully, preserving your fruit. For it is to this that you were assigned from the beginning: to do and preserve, lest having done it, what is done be left unpreserved; otherwise there is no benefit to you at all from your praying."

Interpreting these words, the Russian luminary St. Nilus, the desert-dweller of Sora, who shone forth like the sun in great Russia by the mental work of prayer, as is clear in his Divinely-wise book, says the following: "Now this Saint brings forth from antiquity that one should do and preserve; for the Scripture says that God created Adam and placed him in paradise to do (to work) and preserve paradise. For here this St. Nilus of Sinai calls prayer the doing (work) of paradise, and the guarding against evil thoughts after prayer he calls preserving." Likewise St. Dorotheus also says that the first-created man, being placed by God in paradise, remained in prayer, as he

writes in his first Instruction. From these testimonies it is clear that God, having created man according to His image and likeness, conducted him into a paradise of sweetness to work the immortal gardens, that is, the most pure, exalted, and perfect Divine thoughts, according to St. Gregory the Theologian. And this means nothing else than that he remained, as being pure in soul and heart, in contemplative, grace-filled prayer, sacredly working in the mind alone, that is, in the sweetest vision of God, and that he manfully preserved this, it being the work of paradise, as the apple of his eye, lest it ever decrease in his soul and heart. Wherefore, great is the glory of sacred and Divine mental prayer, whose verge and summit, that is, beginning and perfection, were given to man by God in paradise; and so it is from there that it has its beginning.

But incomparably greater glory did it acquire when the One Holier than all the Saints, more honorable than the Cherubim and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim, the Most Holy Virgin Mother of God, remaining in the Holy of Holies, ascended to the very height of Divine vision by means of mental prayer and was enabled to be the spacious dwelling of God the Word, Whom the whole creation cannot contain, Who was contained in Her Hypostatically and was born of Her without seed for the sake of men's salvation. Of this witness is borne by the invincible pillar of Orthodoxy, our Father among the Saints Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, in his Homily on the Entrance into the Temple of our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary; for he says that the Most Holy Virgin Mother of God, dwelling in the Holy of Holies and coming to understand perfectly, from the Holy Scripture which was read every Sabbath, concerning the human race which was perishing from disobedience, took extreme pity on it and accepted mental prayer to God, that He might soon have mercy on and save the human race. Here I shall present the very words of St. Gregory, a few out of many, which are worthy of an Angelic mind: "For this Divine Maiden, the Virgin, hearing and seeing this, took pity on the common race, and looked how one might obtain a healing and treatment equal to such suffering. She found that She should turn immediately with Her whole mind to God, and She took upon Herself this prayer for us, in order to compel the Uncompellable and attract Him to us the sooner, so that He Himself might uproot the curse from the midst, stop the fire which was devouring the field of the soul, and bind to Himself the creature, having healed his infirmity. Wherefore, the Virgin Full of Grace, having thus examined for Herself what was most fitting and characteristic in every nature, placed mental prayer as wondrous and most

glorious and better than any word. And seeking how She might the more skillfully and appropriately converse with God, She came to Him as a self-placed, or rather God-chosen intercessor."

And later he says: "Wherefore, when She saw nothing among existing things better than this for man, She firmly directed Herself, with awe, toward entreaty, renewed the greater and more perfect, and discovered, and acted, and for those things which are after these She gave activity as the supreme ascent to vision; but vision is as much greater than those things that have been mentioned as truth is greater than imagination. But concentrating everyone within himself, and having purified your minds, hear now the greatness of the mystery; for, taking the opportunity afforded by this whole assembly gathered in the name of Christ, I wish to speak a word above all to those who have renounced the world. One who, for the sake of renunciation, has already tasted of those future good things, who is placed with the Angels and is acquiring a dwelling in the heavens: let him desire to emulate, according to his strength, the first and only one to renounce the world from childhood for the sake of peace, the Ever-Virgin Bride."

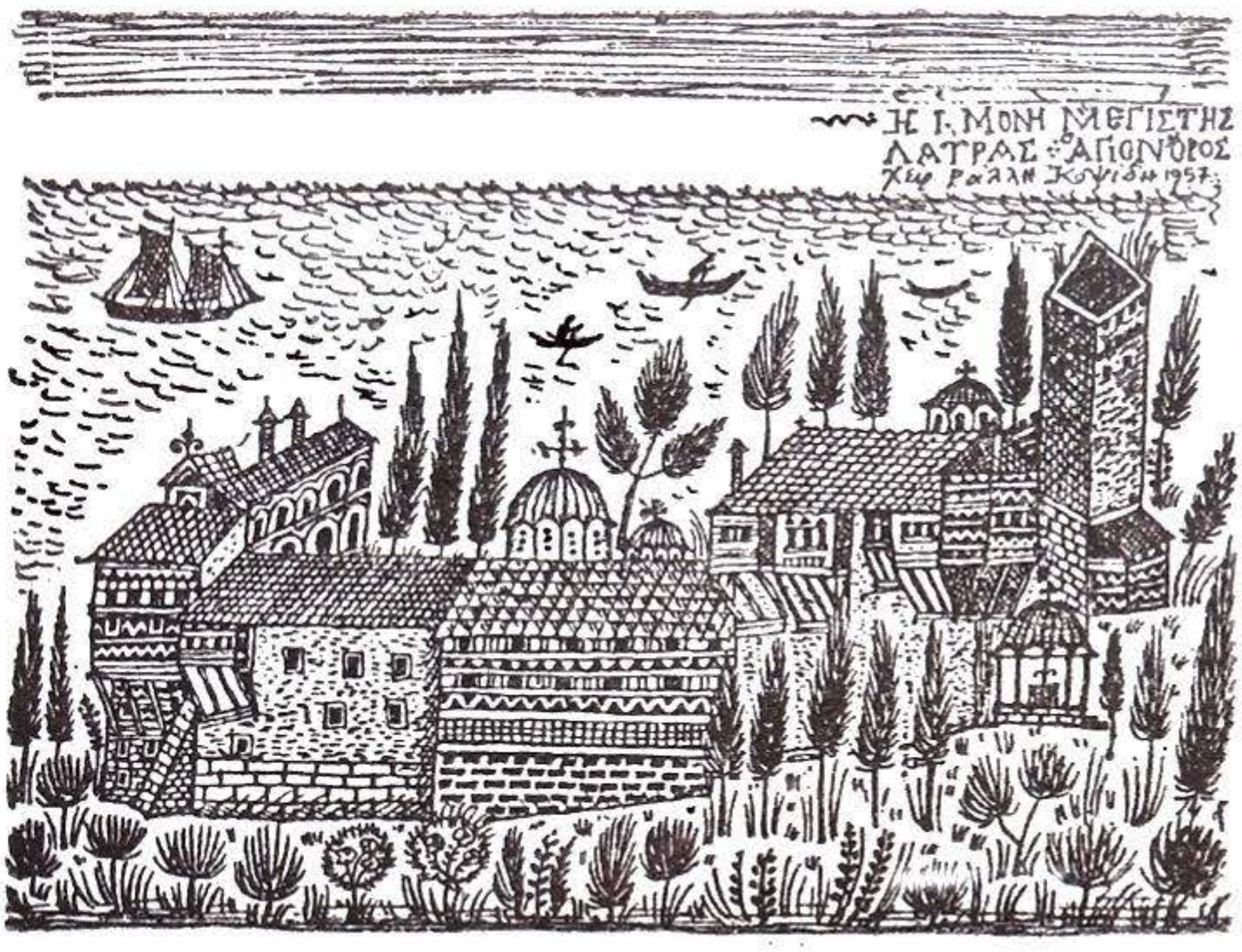
And later St. Gregory says: "Wherefore, seeking what is most necessary to an intercessor for converse, which is what prayer is, the Virgin acquired sacred silence: silence of mind, and separation from the world, forgetfulness of things below and of the exalted knowledge of a hearer of secret things, unto a better transformation. This activity, as in truth an ascent to the One Who truly Is, or, to speak more truly, to Divine vision, is as it were a brief indication for a soul that has acquired this activity in truth. Every other virtue is like a medical treatment which is applicable to infirmities of soul and to evil passions which have become rooted in because of despondency; but Divine vision is the fruit of a healthy soul, as being some kind of ultimate perfection and an image of Divine activity. Wherefore, a man becomes a partaker of God not by words or by judicious moderation in visible things, for this is earthly, and lowly, and human; but rather by dwelling in silence, for it is by this that we become separated from and are released from things below and ascend toward God. And thus, enduring day and night in prayers and entreaties in the upper chamber of the life of silence, we draw near in some measure and approach to that Inaccessible and Blessed Nature. And those who endure thus, and are dissolved in this way in the Light Which Exists unutterably beyond feeling and thought, see God in themselves as in a mirror, having already purified the heart by sacred silence. And thus, silence is a swift and short guide, as being most successful and uniting one with God, especially for those who

keep to it entirely. And the Virgin Who remained in it even from infancy — what is She? She lived in silence in supernatural manner from Her very childhood, and because of this She alone among all women gave birth without a man to the God-man, the Word."

And later he says: "Wherefore also the Most Pure One, renouncing, as it were, the world's very dwelling and talk, moved away from people and, having fled from reproachable life, She chose a life unseen by anyone and uncommunicative, dwelling in the place where no one was allowed to enter. There, being freed of every material tie, and renouncing all contact with and love for anyone, and going beyond showing any mercy for the body, She concentrated the mind in a single turning toward Him and in dwelling with and heedfulness toward Him and in unceasing Divine prayer. And by means of it, dwelling within Herself and placing Herself above multiform disturbance and thoughts and simply above every appearance and thing, She accomplished a new and unutterable path to Heaven, which is, I shall say, the silence of thoughts. And applying Herself industriously to this and heeding it with Her mind, She soared beyond all creatures and saw much better than Moses the glory of God and saw Divine grace belonging in no way to the power of the senses — a sacred and all-joyful vision of undefiled souls and minds, having partaken of which She is, according to the Divine singers, a bright cloud of truly living water, and the Dawn of the mental day, and the fiery Chariot of the Word."

From these words of the divine Gregory Palamas, he who has a mind can understand clearer than the sun that the Most Pure Virgin Mother of God, dwelling in the Holy of Holies, by means of mental prayer ascended to the supreme height of Divine vision; and by renouncing the world for the sake of peace, by sacred silence of the mind, by silence of thoughts, by concentrating the mind toward unceasing Divine prayer and heedfulness, and by ascending through activity to Divine vision — She gave in Herself to the Divine and Angelic monastic order an example of heedful life according to the inner man, so that monks, having renounced the world, looking upon Her might fervently strive, according to their strength and by Her prayers, to be Her emulators in the above-mentioned monastic labors and sweatings. And who can worthily praise Divine mental prayer, a doer of which was the Mother of God Herself, being instructed by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for the benefit and advancement of monks!

But for the confirmation and undoubted assurance of those who doubt regarding this, as if it were a thing unwitnessed and unknown, it is now time



The Lavra of
St. Athanasius

Blessed Paisius

to show what testimonies are brought forth regarding it from Holy Scripture by the Holy Fathers who wrote from the enlightenment of Divine grace.

Divine mental prayer has its unshakable foundation in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ: *But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly* (Matt. 6:6). These words, as has already been said in the first chapter, are interpreted by the lamp of the world, St. John Chrysostom, by means of God-given wisdom, as referring to unvocal, secret prayer which is sent up from the depths of the heart, bringing forth as testimony from the Sacred Scripture the God-seer Moses and St. Anna, mother of Samuel the Prophet, and Righteous Abel and his blood which cried out from the earth — saying that in their prayer, without uttering a single word, they were heard by God. This great teacher of the universe, the lips of Christ, St. John Chrysostom, has also set forth separately, in three homilies, the teaching concerning this Divine prayer, as is written by the unlying witness, Blessed Simeon the Archbishop of Thessalonica, in chapter 294 of his book, which the whole Catholic Eastern Church holds in great veneration as a pillar and confirmation of the truth.

(*Next issue*: *Chapter Two continued.*)

The Life and Ascetic Labor of Our Father, Elder Paisius, Archimandrite of the Holy Moldavian Monasteries of Niamets and Sekoul. Part Two.

MOUNT ATHOS, 1746-1763

25. Paisius' journey to the Holy Mountain of Athos.
26. His arrival on the Holy Mountain in 1746.

THE TIME CAME when our Father desired to see the Holy Mountain of Athos. Wherefore, going to all the holy fathers in his skete and in the other sketes, as well as to those living separately, with tears he asked their forgiveness and their blessing for the journey, thanking them for their mercy and love toward him and for their spiritual and fatherly instruction. He did not heed the words, the entreaties, the counsels of those holy fathers, Basil, Michael, and Onuphrius, who did not wish to be deprived of such a fellow ascetic; and they, conversing among themselves, were astonished at the grace of God in him and at his meekness, and called him a young elder (for the Blessed one at that time was 24 years old!). But then, being unable to keep him, they made prayer, blessed him, and, entrusting him to God's will, let him go in peace.

And so he went from there to seek a companion for the journey to the Holy Mountain of Athos. He had nothing for the journey but twenty copper coins; but he was not concerned over this, for he placed all his hope in the almighty Providence of God. Having found a companion for himself, a certain hieromonk by the name of Triphon, he made an agreement with him, and they set out on their way, giving thanks to God.

How many misfortunes the young Elder suffered from the sea and from hunger, how many times death threatened him, especially at the hands of the Turks! All this he could endure only with the help of God from above. However, with God's help, he reached the Holy Mountain of Athos with joy and good cheer.

Here let the narrative wait a little, while I briefly recount something which is worthy of tears and lamentation.

27. The present lamentable condition of the Holy Mountain.

OUR FATHER, having reached the harbor of monastic dwellings, rejoiced in spirit seeing the holy place where from of old there had been striving for the soul's salvation and unceasing warfare with devils, the garden and the portion of the Most Holy Mother of God. Now, however, that Holy Mountain, which at one time had flowered like a paradise with God-like and spiritual elders and virtuous ascetics, is no longer a garden, but rather a den of misfortune and a dwelling of thieves. For thus did the enemy do, the hater of every good and uprooter of Christian salvation, the ancient sower of tares among the wheat, the fighter against God, the devil: in the place where there had been an abundance of holy things and sanctity, where the whole world, and above all the race of Christians, had had living on this mountain a pillar and confirmation of the Orthodox Faith, an example of piety and salvation, of reverence and everything profitable for the soul — there the evil one (beginning especially in the year 1721) strove to sow his tares by means of certain evil-minded people, having no fear of God, who had come, fancying themselves to be wise and first among others, but who, having gone astray from their mother's womb and become foolish, made many scandals and disturbances, being proud and rebellious, and were for many a cause of scandal and devastation of soul. Wherefore, as the Apostle says (Rom. 1:28), *God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting.* The reverent and God-fearing men who were living there, seeing this, wept bitterly with sighing, and entreated the Lord that these people might come to know their error and their fierce passions, pride and vainglory; for they knew that by these God was angered and He would bring His righteous wrath against them, and together with them, against the innocent also, who had been deceived by the deception of the evil one and above all out of their own carelessness; and soon this came to pass.

For in truth the mountain which is called holy stands now a spectacle before the whole world, above all lamentable for all who love the quiet and silent life of spiritual advancement, that is, for all monks who are true zealots of piety — it is annihilated, mocked, laid waste, and made empty: and in a word, given over to the domination of the Turks. For all the holy monasteries, sketes, and cells are filled with Turks. Only a few of the most courageous in soul, although already infirm in body, have remained there, serving as captives of the barbarians, enduring every misfortune and death itself every day, blessed ones, slaves faithful in their promise to Christ God, knowing that they suffer

BLESSED ELDER PAISIUS
A portrait preserved in St. Elias' Skete

thus from the barbarians for the sake of their own salvation.*

Having said this in brief, I return to my narrative.

28. PAISIUS SETTLES IN A CELL. 29. HE DOES NOT FIND AN ELDER.

PAISIUS AND TRIPHON reached, I say, the Holy Mountain of Athos on July 4, the eve of the feast of St. Athanasius of the Great Lavra. Having left their boat, they entered the Holy Lavra of St. Athanasius and rested a little from their journey, giving thanks with tears to Christ God and His Most Pure Mother, Who had enabled them to reach Her holy place. They went then from the Lavra to their brothers of the Slavonic tongue, who were dependent

* By God's mercy the spiritual condition of the Holy Mountain revived and experienced a new flowering in the 19th century.

on the Monastery of Pantocratoros, and the companion of our Father, Hieromonk Triphon, became severely ill after contracting a cold and fell into an incurable infirmity from which, after being ill for four days, he died. Paisius himself became very ill of the same affliction and, but for the care of the Russian monks, would have died also.

Having recovered, Paisius settled near the Slavonic brethren in a cell which was called Kaparis. Having settled himself there, he went around to all the anchorites and desert-dwelling fathers, seeking a spiritual father according to his intent, one who was advancing in the monastic work and was well-versed in the Divine and patristic writings, who was living alone in silence, in quiet and poverty, to whom he might give himself in obedience. But he did not find such a one, in accordance with God's Providence, and he did not receive the obedience which his soul desired; and so, entrusting himself to God's Providence, he remained alone. The Blessed one at that time was 25 years old (1747).

30. New ascetic labors of the young elder.

WHO CAN DECLARE all his ascetic labors, when he was alone with the One God in flaming zeal for Him! What effort and restraint, fasting, hunger and thirst, sighing and lamenting, and bending of the knee did he not undergo! What entreaties, bitter tears and groans from the depths of the heart did he not utter! What battles against anger, lust, and pride which rise up against godly-mindedness; what battles against despondency, so fierce for one living in silence, and against other evil passions, did he not win, with God's help! What trials and sufferings, afflictions, and infirmities and sorrows of soul and body did he not endure! To this were added the assaults of uncertainty, hopelessness, and despair, a frightful and fierce mental struggle from the envy of the demons. All this the young elder, clinging to Christ God in faith and love, conquered in the Lord Who strengthened him; and for this victory, what fervent tears and thanksgiving did he not pour out and offer to Christ God from his whole heart and soul! Who can enumerate his kneelings, psalmody, and insatiable reading of the Holy Scriptures! As for fasting, such was his rule: he ate every second day only dry bread with water, except for Saturdays, Sundays, and feast days. His poverty and non-acquisitiveness were extreme: he did not possess even an undergarment, but only one cassock and a rasson, both much-patched. However, he only rejoiced over his poverty, as another might over his wealth; and whenever he would go out anywhere, he would not lock the door of his cell, for there was nothing in it save for some books which he had obtained from the Bulgarian monasteries, and which he

read industriously with great heedfulness. Yet he sorrowed and wept bitterly that he had been denied the great grace of God, holy obedience.

Concerning the conditions of his life at this time, Blessed Paisius himself wrote later: "When I came to the Holy Mountain from my Orthodox homeland, I was in such poverty that I could not pay a debt of three pennies to the brothers who came with me. In my bodily infirmity I supported my miserable existence by alms alone. And if only the holy fathers of the Slavonic tongue who were on the Holy Mountain had not helped me, I could in no way have existed there. Many times in winter I would go barefoot and without an undergarment, and such an existence I continued for almost four years. When I had to crawl up with alms from the Lavra or from Hilandari to my poor cell, or bring wood from the forest, or do some other difficult work, afterwards I would lie for two or three days as one paralyzed."*

Thus did our Father remain alone, as has been said, laboring in asceticism and advancing from strength to spiritual strength, making an ascent in his heart every day and being kindled with Divine zeal for greater labors, at the same time sweetly experiencing the bedewing of fiery Divine fervency in most quiet, soul-saving, and joy-creating silence, for three years and a half.

Such were the suffering and the labors of our Father. For such is the labor and the battle of a true monk against the diabolic powers which have apostated from God; because the sinful soul which desires to be saved must withstand even unto blood and death and, with God's help, conquer.

31. The arrival of Elder Basil and Paisius' tonsure.

AT THIS TIME, by God's Providence, there came to the Holy Mountain the above-mentioned Elder, Schema-monk Basil, from Vlachia (being summoned there by a certain great person), and finding our Father living in silence, he remained there for some days, instructing him and revealing to him from the Holy Scriptures all three forms of monastic life and all the Christian Mysteries, speaking thus: "All monastic life is divided into three kinds: the first, cœnobitism; the second, called the royal or middle path, when two or three settle together and have a common property, common food and clothing, common labor and handiwork, common care for the means of existence, and, renouncing in everything their own will, are in obedience to each other in the fear of God and love; and the third kind, solitary anchoretism, which is suitable only for perfect and holy men. At the present time, however, certain ones,

* This paragraph is from Chetverikov, vol. 1, p. 66.

despite the writings of the Fathers, have obtained for themselves a fourth kind or order of monasticism [i.e., "idiorrhythmic"]: each builds his own cell where, so he thinks, he lives solitarily, each preferring his own will, and independently taking care for his means of existence. In appearance they are like anchorites, but in reality they are self-willed and stand in the way of their own salvation, for they have chosen a way of life not in accordance with their own means and spiritual maturity. Whoever with heedfulness will examine the book of St. Gregory the Sinaite will find there what is called the state of the self-willed, namely, a solitary and non-cœnobitic arbitrary existence. It is better, living together with a brother, to acknowledge one's own infirmity and measure, to repent and pray before the Lord and be cleansed by the daily grace of Christ, rather than to bear in oneself vainglory and self-opinion with cunning and to cover them up and maintain a solitary life, not even a trace of which, in the words of Climacus, they are capable of seeing because of their passionateness. St. Barsanuphius the Great also says that a premature life of silence is a cause of high-mindedness."*

Our Father entreated the blessed Elder with tears to clothe him in the mantle, and he did so; and he changed his name from Platon to Paisius, and our Father was his disciple (being then 28 years old). The Elder, entrusting him to Christ God and to the Most Pure Virgin Mother of God, departed again for Vlachia, for his Skete of Merlopolyany.

32. The arrival of the young monk Bessarion.

AFTER THIS some three months passed, and then there came to the Holy Mountain from Vlachia a young monk by the name of Bessarion. He went about to some of the fathers there, seeking an instructor for himself, and he did not find one. He came also to our Father and entreated him with tears to speak a word to him on the salvation of the soul, and on what kind of instructor he should find to whom he might entrust his soul. The Blessed one, sighing from the depths of his heart, burst into tears and then, having been silent for a little, said, while praying mentally: "Brother! You compel me to say something sad, and I renew the pain in my own heart; because I also, with much effort and sorrow, likewise sought an instructor and did not find one, and I endured many sorrows, and even now I bear them. Wherefore, feeling compassion for you, for I see that you have sorrow without bounds, I fear lest you might fall into despair; and so I will tell you some small thing according to the power of my infirm mind."

* The words of Elder Basil are from Chetverikov, I, pp. 66-67.

33. What a true instructor should be.

THE SALVATION of the soul, concerning which you ask me, cannot be made easy except by a true spiritual instructor, one who forces himself first of all to fulfill all the commandments of the Lord, in accordance with the word of the Lord: *He that shall fulfill and teach them shall be called great* (Matt. 5:19). For how can one instruct another on a path which he himself has not walked? He himself first of all must withstand all the passions of soul and body even unto blood, and conquer lust and anger with the help of Christ, and heal the rational part of the soul of foolishness and pride by means of prayer and humility of wisdom. And likewise he must bring into subjection love of pleasure, and love of glory, and the fierce love of money, those evil poisonous serpents of this world, and all the other evil passions of the soul; for the Lord Jesus Himself was the founder of the battle against them and the first leader of the victory over them, as has been said: When Jesus was led out into the desert, He repelled satan by means of fasting, humility, poverty, vigil and prayer, and by opposing him with the Divine Scriptures; and He gave the crown of this victory upon the head of our nature, thus teaching us how and giving us power to conquer him. Wherefore, he who follows his Lord by means of these, with humility and love, and accepts from Him the mission to treat other souls and instruct them in His commandments, receives also from the Lord at the same time, because of humility, the power to conquer all the above-named passions; and if, after this, such a one has been enlightened, by Christ's grace, with the granting of the Spirit, in accordance with the words of the Lord: *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven* (Matt. 5:16) — such an instructor is able to show as well to those learning from him all the commandments of Christ and all the virtues in very deed, without deception; and all the more can he show these ruling virtues: humility, meekness, the poverty of Christ, longsuffering in everything, mercy beyond one's own strength, and burning love toward God, and unhypocritical love toward one's neighbor from the heart, from which is born true spiritual discernment. Then, such a one teaches others to lay down their lives for all of Christ's commandments. Seeing and hearing all this, one who is learning from such a teacher, following him with faith and love, can, with God's help and his teacher's instruction, advance and receive salvation.

"Such, O brother, is the instructor we should acquire; but alas for our times, whose woeful state our God-bearing Fathers foresaw by the Holy Spirit,

and, out of pity, as to their children, set forth for all of us in their holy writings to strengthen us. Thus, the divine Simeon the New Theologian says: 'Rare are they, in truth, and especially now, who know how to shepherd and treat skillfully rational souls. For many, perhaps, have pretended to acquire, or in deed have acquired, fasting, vigil, and the appearance of reverence, and with ease can speak from the breast and teach how to multiply words; but very few are they who cut off the passions by means of humility of wisdom and constant lamentation and tears, and who acquire the ruling virtues inseparably from themselves.' In confirmation of his words he quotes the most ancient Holy Fathers, and speaks thus: 'For our divine Fathers say: he who wishes to cut off passions, cuts them off by means of lamentation, and he who wishes to acquire virtues, acquires them by means of lamentation. For it is evident that a monk who does not weep every day neither cuts off the passions nor performs the virtues, nor is he ever a partaker of [spiritual] gifts; for one thing,' he says, 'is virtue, and another is gifts.'

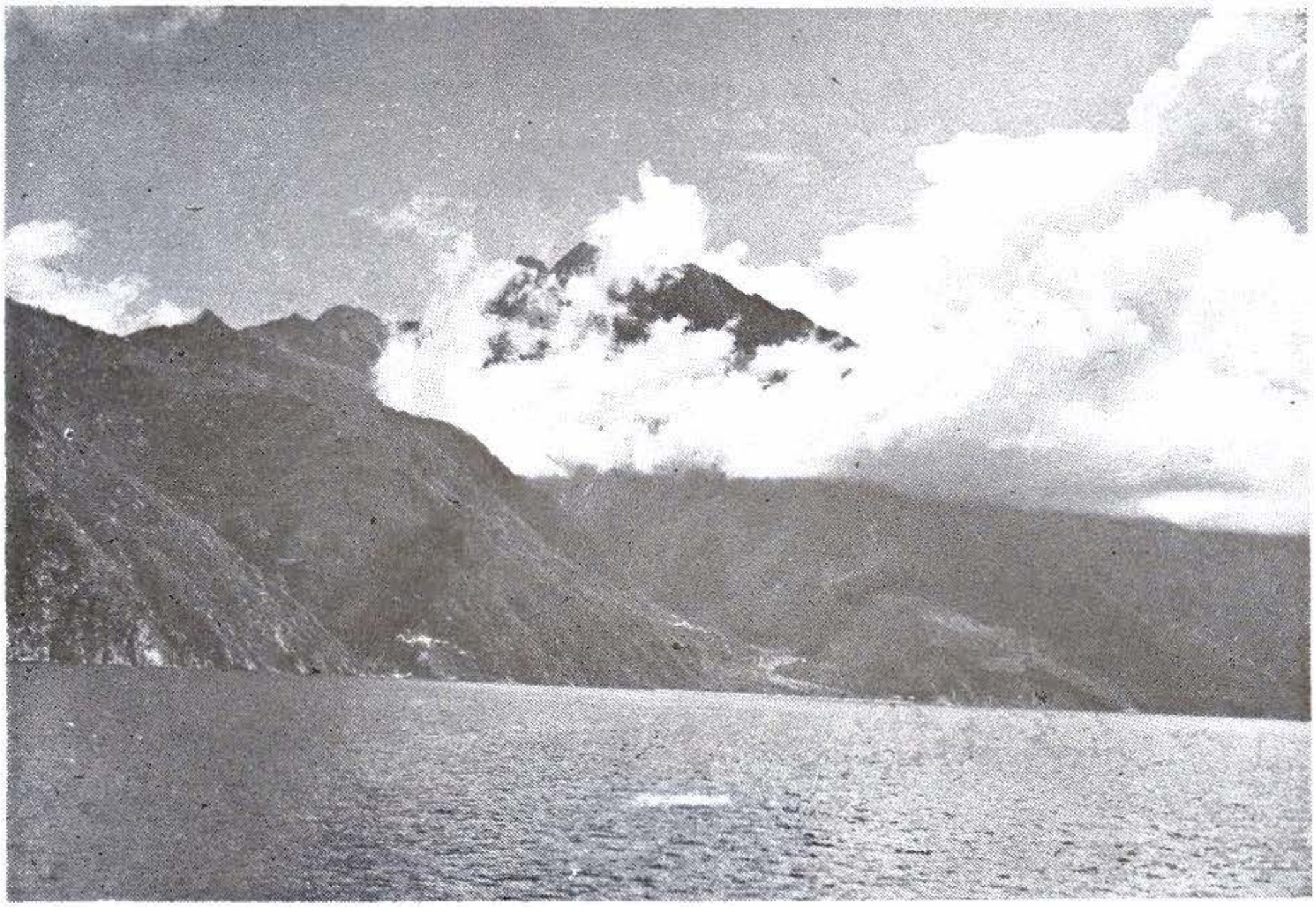
"Likewise, the God-bearing Father so near to us, the Russian luminary, Nilus of Sora,* having examined all this with much care in the Divine Scriptures and seen the woeful state of these times and the present unconcern of men, in the foreword to his book counsels zealots in this manner: 'With great pains one must seek out an undeceived instructor; and if we do not find one, then the Holy Fathers have commanded us,' he says, 'to take instruction from the Divine Scriptures and the teaching of the Holy Fathers, hearing the Lord Himself, Who said: *Search the Scriptures, and in them ye shall find eternal life*' (John 5:39). And if this Saint spoke thus only concerning the mental work [of the Jesus Prayer], then how much more is there need to find a skilled practitioner and undeceived instructor for the deliverance of the soul from all evil passions and instruction in the right path of doing God's commandments?

"Wherefore, O brother, we have extreme need now to learn day and night, with much pain and many tears, from the Divine and Patristic writings, and to be instructed in the commandments of God and in the doings of our Holy Fathers by taking counsel of like-minded zealots among our eldest Fathers. And thus, by the mercy of Christ and by forcing ourselves, we can receive salvation."

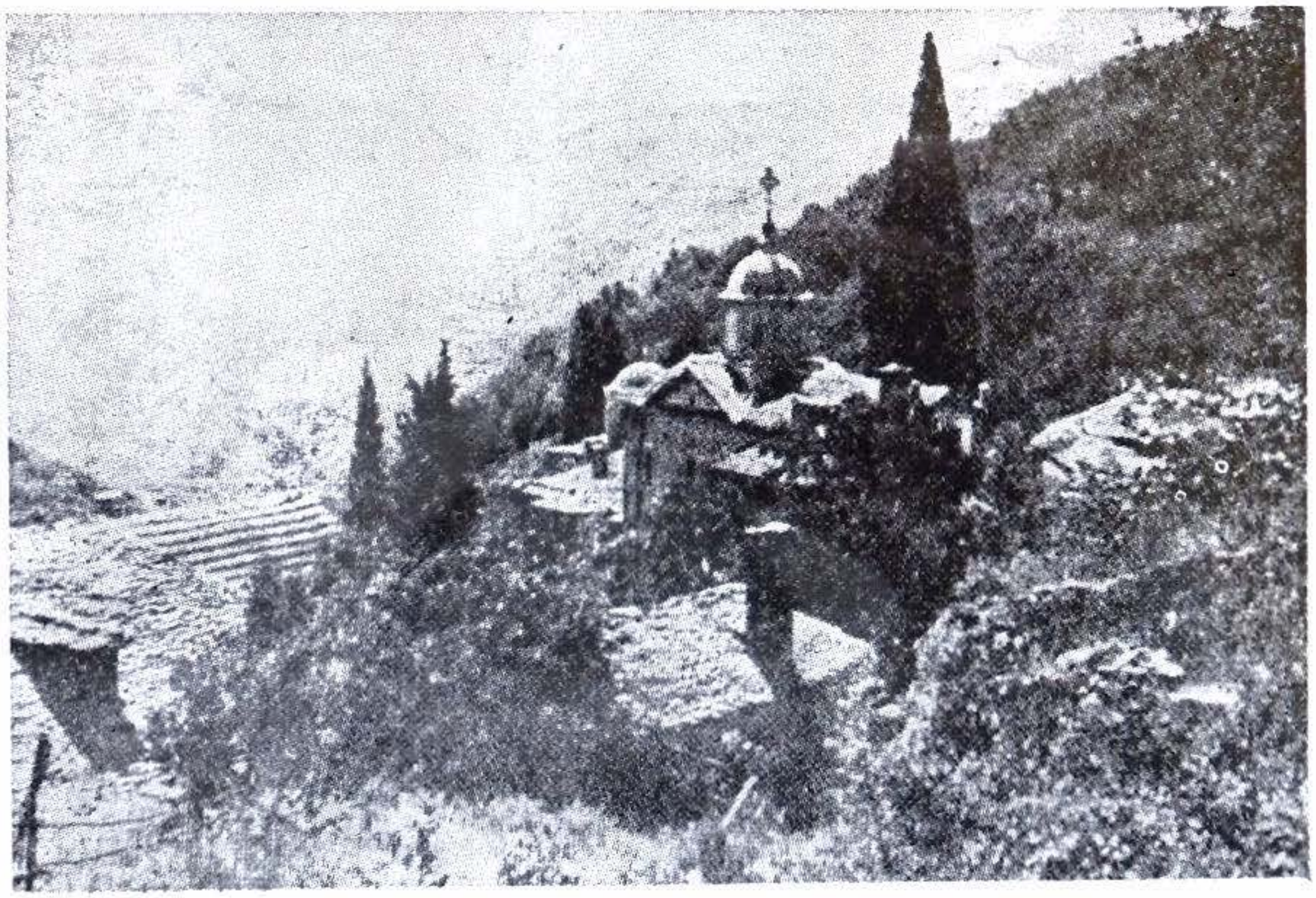
34. Bessarion asks our Father to be his elder.
35. Paisius shows him the royal path; their friendship.

WHEN THE MONK Bessarion, hearing all this from our Father, thought to himself: "What more am I looking for?" And immediately he fell to Paisius' feet with tears and entreated our Father to accept him under obedience.

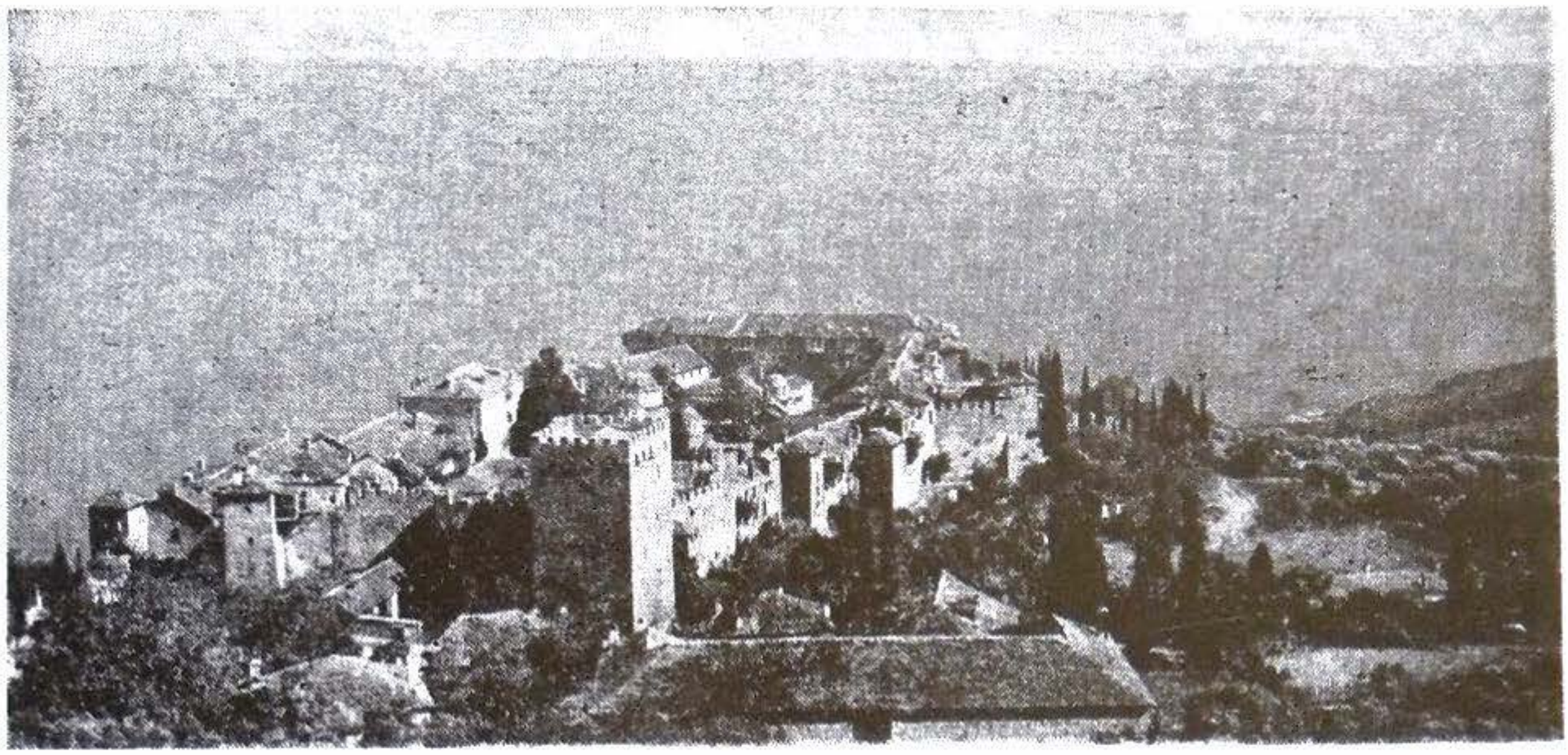
* For his Life, see *The Orthodox Word*, 1972, no. 5.



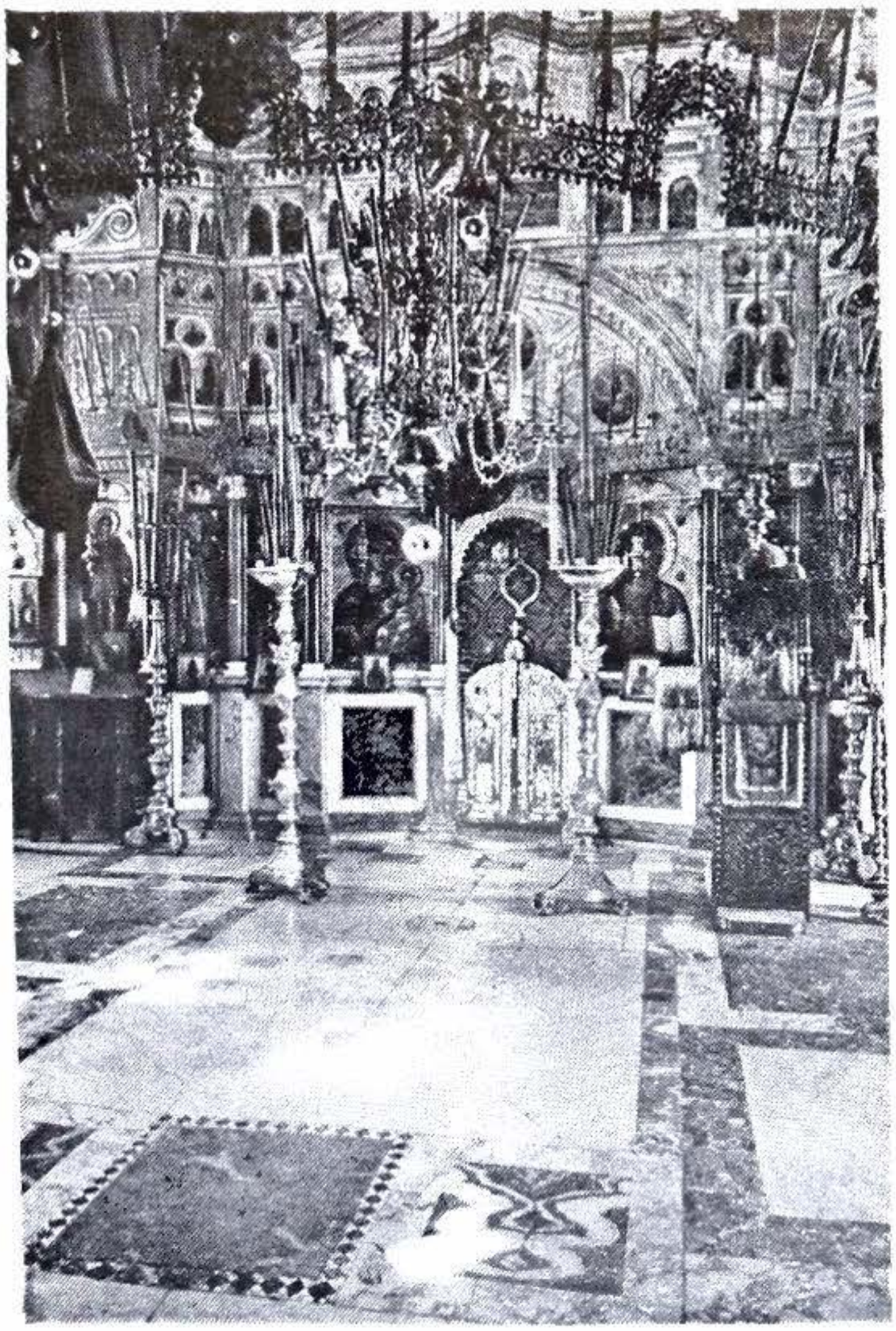
The peak of longed-for Athos as it must have appeared to young Paisius



The Skete of Xylourgou on Mount Athos,
where Slavonic monks have lived for many centuries



The Monastery of Great Lavra



ST. ATHANASIUS OF MT. ATHOS

on whose feast day Blessed
Paisius arrived on Mt. Athos
and came to the Saint's Lavra

Interior of the main church
of the Great Lavra

The Elder, however, did not even wish to hear about being anyone's superior, himself wishing to be under authority. But Bessarion all the more fervently fell down with many tears and for three days, without leaving, he entreated him to accept him. Our Father, seeing such humility and tears of the brother, was moved and was persuaded to accept him, not as a disciple but as a friend, in order to live the middle path of two together, whoever should be granted by God to understand more in the Holy Scriptures revealing to the other the will of God, and laboring together in the doing of God's commandments and in every good thing, cutting off before each other their own will and understanding and obeying each other for what is good, having a single soul and offering, and having everything for the support of their life in common.

Paisius himself describes thus, with great humility, the end of his solitary life on the Holy Mountain and the beginning of his royal path together with Bessarion: "Thus, not being worthy to obtain the guidance which my soul desired, I remained in a certain cell in a supposed life of solitude for some time, and trusting to God's Providence for my poor soul, I began to read the patristic books a little, taking them from my patrons in God, the Serbian and Bulgarian monasteries, reading them attentively. Then, the Lord enlightening my blindness, I came to know as in a looking glass how I should be beginning my poor monasticism, and in what manner; and I understood what grace of God I had been deprived of by not giving myself over in obedience of soul and body to some experienced father, not having been able, in my ignorance, to receive instruction from anyone in such a holy thing. And I discovered that my poor supposed life of silence was beyond my means, but that it is only for the perfect and the passionless to live alone; and being further perplexed as to where to give myself over in obedience, I many times, as a child over its dead mother, sighed and wept over this. However, not finding, for many good reasons, a place where I might be in obedience, I thought of undertaking the life according to the royal path, with a single like-minded and like-souled brother, and in place of a father to have God as instructor and the teaching of the Holy Fathers, and to be in obedience to each other and to serve each other, to have a single soul and a single heart and to have everything for the upkeep of our life in common, knowing that of this path of monasticism the Holy Fathers have testified from the Holy Scripture.

"God favoring this my good intent, there came to me on the Holy Mountain a brother like-minded in everything... who began to live with me as one in soul. And thus, by the grace of Christ, in part my soul found a certain consolation and much-desired rest, and I, the miserable one, was able to

see at least a trace of the benefit of holy obedience, which we had toward each other for the sake of cutting off our own wills, having instead of a father and instructor the teaching of our Holy Fathers and submitting to each other in the love of God."*

And so, having made firm their beginning in the tradition of the Holy Fathers, they began to live together with one soul. And the Elder was comforted in his soul that he had found, by the grace of Christ, peace of soul, so as to live together with a like-minded brother for the sake of cutting off before each other their own will and understanding, which the Fathers judged to be obedience. And instead of a Father and instructor they had the teaching of our Holy and God-bearing Fathers. And they remained in deep peace, laboring in asceticism, burning in spirit, and placing a good beginning to each day so as to advance to perfect humility and love of God and neighbor and of each other, by fulfilling His holy commandments.

36. Disciples. 37. The beginning of coenobitic life.

BUT NOT FOR LONG did they enjoy such a quiet, silent life, sweet in God and consoling to the soul, only for four years and a little more (until 1754). "For other brothers," wrote Paisius later, "coming from the world into monasticism, seeing the loving life which I lived with my brother, became inflamed with zeal to unite themselves to such a life; and they began to wear me out sorely with their mighty entreaty to accept them as disciples living with us. For a long time I refused, fearing and trembling to accept anyone as a disciple, knowing this to be a work of the perfect and the passionless, being myself infirm and passionate; and so I did not accept them, some for four years, some for three, some for two, and others for some other long time.

"But then, whether from the great weariness which they gave me with their entreaty, or because the brother living with me was most loving of his brothers, I was persuaded by their tearful entreaty and began even against my will to accept them to live with us, one by one, to each of them revealing, as I had strength, the power of holy obedience according to Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Holy Fathers; and seeing that they had measureless faith and love for Holy Scripture and for me, unworthy one, and were in peace and one in mind with each other, I rejoiced greatly in soul at their good will and glorified God, trusting in His unutterable Providence to provide for them in soul and body, and receiving them one by one as with their whole heart they gave themselves over soul and body into blessed obedience.

* The whole quote from Paisius is contained in a letter of his, printed in the Optina edition of his Life, pp. 231-232.

"And in this way from the royal path, that is, dwelling together with one or two brothers, there was formed by the grace of Christ our common life, the number of brethren increasing not a little."*

When, at first, Parthenius and Cæsarius joined Paisius and Bessarion, their cell became too crowded for four and they had to acquire a second cell, which was bought not far from the first. And when the number of brethren increased to eight, it was decided to acquire the Cell of St. Constantine with a church, which was located two stones' throw from their first cell. The first eight brothers to join the Elder were of the Moldavian tongue, and their rule of prayer was performed in that tongue.** But then there began to come to our Father's community some brethren of the Slavonic tongue as well, and thus in all there were twelve brothers. And they began to read and sing the rule in church in the Moldavian and Slavonic languages.

The life of the new community was very difficult. Paisius later described it in this way: "With the approach of winter, having nowhere to lay our heads, since there were no cells, we began ourselves to build five cells at St. Constantine's. Who can imagine the need which we endured for four months without shoes and without undergarments, almost the whole winter building cells and dragging earth and stones for the building. And besides this, when Sunday or a feast would come, instead of rest we had to run about almost naked from monastery to monastery begging alms, in old clothing, shivering from cold. Then, out of great need and extreme labor, the brethren many times would come in the evening and fall down like dead men and fall asleep without eating. In such need our rule of prayer also was omitted many times, and in place of Compline I ordered that only "Have mercy on me, O God" (Psalm 50) and "I believe" (the Creed) be read, and then to sleep. But even then we did not omit Matins, but read according to our strength sometimes three kathismata (of the Psalter), and sometimes more.† In place of the Hours we had the Paraklisis to the Most Holy Mother of God; but sometimes we read the Hours also. And what more shall I say? Out of our extreme want we all would have wished to break up and separate, if only most merciful Christ our Lord had not strengthened us by His grace in humility,

* This quote from Paisius is from *op. cit.*, p. 232.

** The text in this paragraph up to here is added from Chetverikov, I, p. 70.

† During Lent, in addition to the three kathismata appointed for Matins, there are additional kathismata for the Hours, which perhaps the monks read at Matins when they did not read the Hours.

in patience, in love for God and each other, in order to endure according to Christ's commandments and thus to master all our difficulties."*

38. The brethren persuade the Elder to accept priesthood.

THEN THE BRETHREN had great need of a priest and confessor; and all of them, having agreed among themselves, began with great and humble entreaty to entreat the Elder to accept the priesthood and become their confessor. But he did not even wish to hear of this, saying: "It is for this very reason that I fled Vlachia." Yet as much as he refused with tears, so much the more did they, again and again, falling to his feet with tears, entreat and beg him not to disdain their entreaty, offering him many and great reasons, and above all this: "When we confess," they said, "to other confessors, those counsels and commandments befitting our life which we receive from you, are overturned by their counsels, and from this we are sorely harmed in soul. For many of them are spiritually young, whether in years or in understanding; and the Divine Scripture says: *Woe to thee, O city, when thy king is young* (Eccl. 10: 16). Taking these words, the Holy Fathers say: Woe to the brethren whose superior or confessor is young, and strong in body, all the more if he is inexperienced in spiritual works, if he neither is a partaker of right understanding and spiritual discernment, nor knows the many kinds of passions and infirmities of soul and body. If he were a diligent performer of Christ's commandments, then in his own measure he would not be deprived of gifts from the Lord such as spiritual understanding and discernment, mercy, humility, and love toward God and neighbor, which are the ruling or chief and first virtues. For thus does St. Simeon the New Theologian also affirm concerning this, saying: 'There is no one who seeks and knocks mightily, with his whole soul, according to the word of the Lord, who will not find and be made rich in gifts.' "

This and much else, weeping and falling down, they brought before the Blessed one, and further, the venerable and eldest fathers of the Holy Mountain as well, with great entreaty, exhorted him not to refuse; for they knew him to be worthy and able, with God's help, to bring many souls to the Lord by his instruction, and even more by his love and humility. And therefore these spiritual fathers did not lessen their counselling and their threatening accusation of disobedience, and said to him: "How will you teach the brethren obedience and cutting off of their own will and understanding, if you yourself disobey and disdain the tearful entreaty of so many people and of us? Do you not know what disobedience gave birth to?"

* Paisius' words are from Chetverikov, I, p. 71.

Then the Elder, seeing himself under such inescapable pressure from all sides, submitted even against his will and said with tears: "May the will of God be done." And he was ordained priest and made a confessor in the year 1758, at the age of 36; and there was great joy among all his spiritual children.

39. The foundation of the Skete of the Prophet Elias.
40. Increase of the brethren.

AFTER THIS, when the Lord had multiplied the brethren and there was no room for them in the church and cells of St. Constantine, our Father took counsel with the brethren and asked for the old and empty Cell of the Holy Prophet Elias, a dependency of the same monastery of Pantocratoros, which was half-an-hour's walk from the Cell of St. Constantine; and at the same time he asked the blessing of the Most Holy Patriarch Seraphim, who was staying in that monastery at that time. And he began to build from the foundation the Skete of the Prophet Elias. He built a church, refectory, bakery, kitchen, guesthouse, and 16 cells; for the Elder had the intention by no means to accept more than 15 brothers, which is why he built just such a number of cells. And they all settled in the Skete with joy, thanking and glorifying God that He had favored the middle path to be transformed into cœnobitic life.

Then it was that our Father established the church rule of prayer in a more orderly way, in accordance with the order of the Holy Mountain, and divided the brethren into two tongues, the Slavonic and Moldavian. He also had hope, after such labor, of finding rest; but he was to come into yet greater labors. For many of the brethren of the Holy Mountain, and those newly come also, having seen such good order in his church: that is, humility, quietness and reverence in singing and reading; the whole brotherhood's standing in church with fear of God and reverence; the discharge by priests and ecclesiarchs* of their service and only the most necessary words, with reverence and quietness; the handiwork performed outside of church in general obedience with humility and silence; and the constant heartfelt peace among the brethren, their love and cutting off of their own will, their reverent obedience to the Elder with faith and love; and likewise the Elder's fatherly mercifulness toward his spiritual children, his well-discerned assignment of work, his unhypocritical compassion and love for all in their infirmities of soul and in every bodily need — having seen all this, they became inflamed with burning

* Monks in charge of church services.

ST. MACARIOS OF CORINTH, by Constantine Cavarnos. Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies (115 Gilbert Road, Belmont, Mass., 02178), 1972. 118 pp. Cloth $4.50, paper $2.75.

THE TASK of being and remaining an Orthodox Christian in these last times, amidst great temptations of body and soul, is a very difficult one, and one of the chief concerns of those who are consciously striving to do so has been to return to the patristic sources of Orthodoxy — not as an academic exercise or intellectual fashion, as it very largely is in the remaining "theological academies," but rather as the result of a genuine thirst for these true springs of Orthodox life, which are at the same time the standard against which we must measure our own poor Orthodox life. This task has been a constant one throughout Orthodox history, but it is an especially critical one now when the leaders of almost all the Orthodox Churches are in the process of abandoning Orthodoxy altogether and leaving their flocks to the mercy of heterodox and pagan ways of thought and life.

Some of the most important Holy Fathers for us today are those who lived at the dawn of our own era, the mid- to late 18th century, when the specifically "modern" outlook was chiefly formed. It is they who largely serve as our link with the patristic past, pointing out to us those things over which we should be zealous, the pitfalls we should avoid, the most useful patristic sources for us to read.

In the Russian Church the key Holy Father of the 18th century, as concerns the collection and translation of the patristic sources, was the Blessed Elder Paisius Velichkovsky (1722-1794); in the Greek Church the key figures were St. Macarios of Corinth (1731-1805) and St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite (1749-1809), who worked so closely together that it is not known to which of them should be ascribed several of their most important works. The present

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zeal to partake of such a life, and by their great entreaty and their frequent falling down before him with tears, they persuaded him to accept them even against his will. Since there were no cells, out of need they built little cells on the slope below, under the first cells, attached to the stone wall two or three together. And so everyone worked in common at handiwork, and the Elder himself made spoons with them in the daytime, and at night he copied out the patristic books (and thus his whole life was spent in all-night vigil, and he could not sleep for more than three hours), translating them from the Greek language into Slavonic. For he soon learned, with God's help, not only the simple Greek language, but also ancient Greek, from his brother Macarius, who knew that language well, and in the beginning he translated under his guidance.

(*Next issue: Blessed Paisius on Mt. Athos, concluded.*)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

book is the first to appear in English on St. Macarios, containing the Life by his friend St. Athanasios Parios, a valuable introduction by Dr. Cavarnos, and brief excerpts from the Saint's writings.

From all of these the holiness of the Saint and the great significance of his compilations and writings are evident. We learn of the great importance which he attached to Orthodox education and schools and to printing Orthodox texts in the more accessible vernacular Greek (he also inspired others to translate the lives and writings of the Saints into this tongue); of his strict adherence to Orthodox tradition and his efforts to remove bad innovations in church life, which made him one of the leaders of the zealot or "Kollyvades" movement of that time; of his concern to preserve the hesychast tradition of mental prayer, which led to the publication of the Greek *Philocalia*; of his labors in writing the lives of the new ascetics (the *Neon Leimonarion* or *New Spiritual Meadow*) and the new martyrs of the Turkish Yoke (*New Martyrologion*); and of his efforts to make known to the people the authentic doctrine of the Orthodox Church, which led him to distribute catechisms to the people and to publish a Greek translation of the *Holy Catechism* of Metropolitan Platon of Moscow (which, in its later revision by Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, is to this day the standard catechism of the Russian Church). The Saint himself is revealed in the book as a great ascetic, an enlightener and guide, a conscientious hierarch, and a trainer and inspirer of martyrs.

On most of these points the parallel with Elder Paisius Velichkovsky is evident, and one only wishes the book had at least mentioned the connection between the Russian and Greek zealot movements of the 18th century. Evidently the Slavonic sources have more information on this connection than the Greek sources. It is known that Elder Paisius knew both the ancient and vernacular Greek languages and had Greek disciples on Mt. Athos; that St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite attempted (but failed) to go to Moldavia to become Paisius' disciple*; and that Paisius was in contact with St. Macarios and followed with great interest and in detail the latter's own search for patristic manuscripts, as will be related in a later installment of Paisius' Life in *The Orthodox Word*. Here the question of "influences" is, of course, unimportant beside the far more important fact of the oneness of the Orthodox spirit that inspired the labors of those Holy Fathers, even as it inspires the Greek and Russian zealot movement of our own day.

It is possible to correct one point in the book from the Slavonic sources. Apparently the origin of the Greek *Philocalia* is not clearly indicated in the Greek sources, and Dr. Cavarnos assumes that St. Macarios himself was the

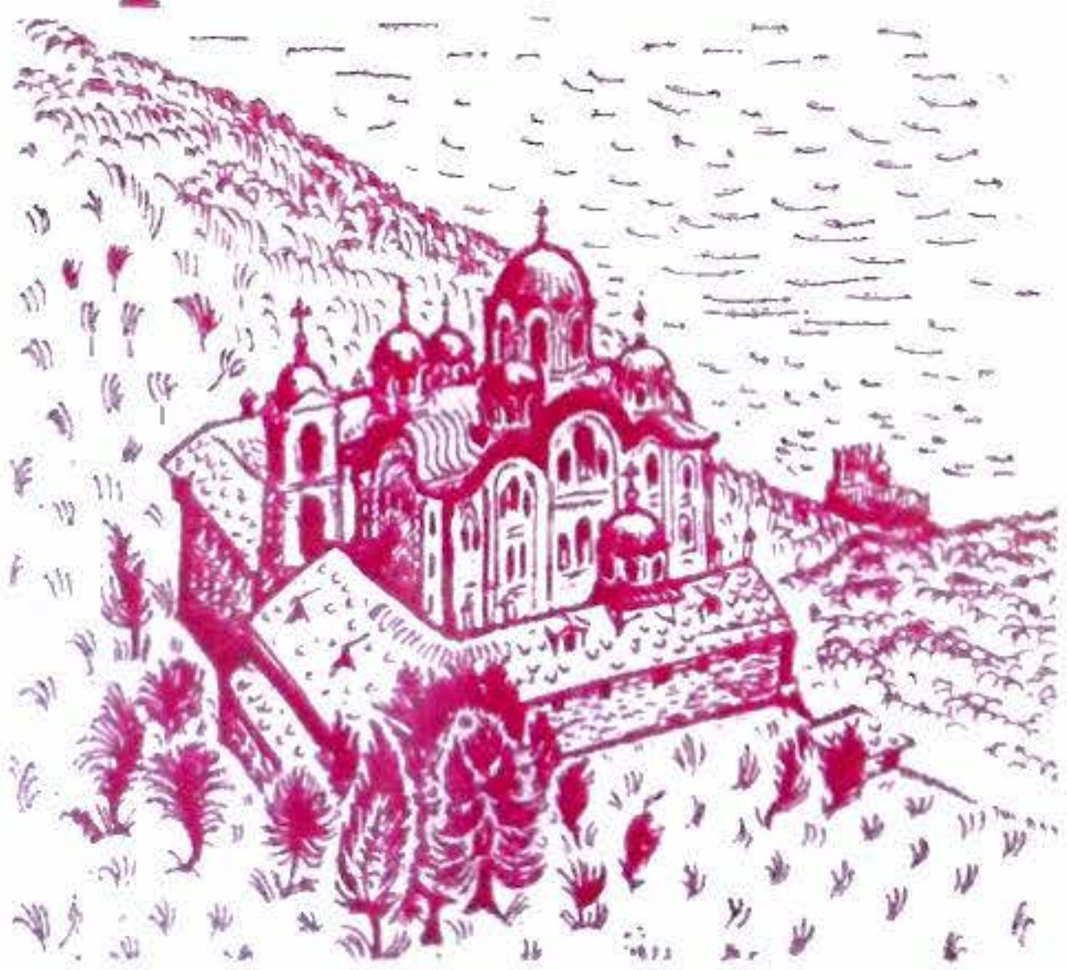
* See the life of St. Nicodemos by Monk Theodoritos of St. Anne's Skete, *The Orthodox Word*, 1965, no. 5, p. 163.

compiler. However, the Elder Paisius gives a precise account of the discovery of the Greek manuscript of the *Philocalia* in a letter to Archimandrite Theodosius of the Sorroniev Hermitage: "The Most Reverend Macarios, former Metropolitan of Corinth,... found in the library of the most glorious and great monastery of Vatopedi a priceless treasure, that is, a book concerning the uniting of the mind with God which had been compiled in olden times from all the Saints by great zealots, as well as other books on prayer which we had not heard of up to now; and having had them copied out at no little expense within a few years by many skilled calligraphers, and having read them himself most diligently together with the originals and corrected them most certainly, and having placed the lives of all the holy writers of these books at the beginning of the books... he came to the most glorious Asian city of Smyrna and sent to Venice at no little cost, which was collected from the alms of lovers of Christ, 36 patristic books, including the book of St. Callistus,... so that they might be published in printed form." This is surely the most detailed and certain evidence we have concerning the origin of the Greek *Philocalia*, in which it may be seen that St. Macarios was the editor and corrector rather than the original compiler of it.

St. Macarios of Corinth is the second in a series of "Modern Orthodox Saints" which is being presented by Dr. Cavarnos, the first in the series being *St. Cosmas Aitolas*, and the next the eagerly-awaited *St. Nicodemos the Hagiorite*. The book is very well presented and printed.

Skete of the Prophet Elias

The Skete founded by Blessed Paisius Velichkovsky is still alive, being kept up by monks of the Russian Church Outside of Russia. The Divine Liturgy is celebrated regularly, and names of the Orthodox living and dead for commemoration, as well as contributions for the upkeep of the Skete, may be sent to:



REV. HIEROMONK SERAPHIM (BOBICH)
SKETE OF THE PROPHET ELIAS
KARYES, MT. ATHOS, GREECE